



SPC Jason B. Baker



BAND PLAYS DIFFERENT TUNE IN IRAQ

Camp Eagle III, Iraq

WITH the entire 101st Airborne Division deployed to Southwest Asia supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom, every soldier wearing the “Screaming Eagle” patch played a part in making the mission successful.

The division’s band, a unit known for entertaining fellow soldiers at home in Fort Campbell, Ky., now was protecting them.

“Our mission during Operation Iraqi Freedom is to provide security and protect the access to our division’s command post,” said CW3 Michael F. Ritter, the band’s commander. “We’re willing to do whatever needs to be done to complete our mission.”

Ritter said the 40-member band also manned security checkpoints, a mission the musicians normally don’t perform during training in Kentucky. And when division commander MG David H. Petraeus and his staff needed tents set up, it was the band members who answered the call. Petraeus complemented the band and gave several soldiers division coins.

Ritter said the band members regularly train on their common soldier tasks and did not deploy to the Middle East unprepared for their current missions.

The musicians plan to be a part of any mission in Iraq, without touching their instruments.

“Any tasks we’re given, we’ll do our best to complete,” said Ritter.

— PFC Thomas Day, 40th Public Affairs Detachment

PFC Joshua Hutcherson



BRONZE STARS FOR VALOR IN COMBAT

An Najaf, Iraq

U.S. Central Command commander GEN Tommy Franks talks with SGTs Lucas Goddard and James Ward of 1st Battalion, 327th Infantry Regiment, before giving them Bronze Stars for valor.

WINNING HEARTS WITH CULTURAL AWARENESS ►

Camp Champion, Kuwait

CULTURAL awareness was one of the primary weapons the Army wanted to use to win the hearts and minds of Iraq's people.

Prior to Operation Iraqi Freedom, 82nd Airborne Division soldiers prepared themselves and others for this mission.

"Today was real basic," said SFC Eric Sifford, an assistant platoon leader from Company B, 313th Military Intelligence Battalion. "We taught the soldiers a few greetings and written Arabic words; the things that will save their lives."

Instructors taught basic commands such as "stop" and "drop your weapon." Soldiers also learned to recognize such Arabic words as "danger" and "mines."

"These are the things they're going to run into on the battlefield," said SGT Seth Harvey, an Arabic linguist in Co. B. "We care about the individual soldiers. We wanted to give them basic skills to help them avoid accidents."

Many soldiers agreed with Harvey that the training was important.

"Right after this we're going to practice the terms we learned today," said SGT Bobby Weible of the 3rd Battalion, 4th Air Defense Artillery Regiment. "This is going to help us whenever we have to deal with the locals."

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Cultural awareness and sensitivity was also an important part of the soldiers' training.

"We wanted to show the culture in a real way," said Harvey. "Soldiers need to connect with it and understand the culture in a personal way."

The instructors hoped that the training would go beyond just teaching the soldiers a few terms, but also help them understand the Middle East while erasing preconceived stereotypes or myths about Arabs.

"We got a lot more than expected," said Sifford. "If the soldiers learn to respect the cultural heritage of this region, it will make a difference in winning over the hearts and minds of the Iraqi people."

— SPC Jason B. Baker, 49th PAD

INDIA HOSTS PKO EXERCISE ►

New Delhi, India

A TWO-WEEK peacekeeping exercise was held in New Delhi, India, to help build regional security in South Asia and increase interoperability and readiness among the 17 participating nations.

Several members of the 524th Corps Support Battalion represented the U.S. in the United Nations' led exercise. The soldiers also were the principal logistical support element for the more than 4,000 personnel involved in the exercise.

"The training challenged us tremendously," said LTC Dan Georgi of the 524th CSB. "It gave us an opportunity to learn how to support U.N. operations, as well as challenging us to deal with the multitude of logistical requirements found among diverse forces."

"The coordination and interaction among the different armed forces and many humanitarian organizations participating in this exercise was tremendous," he said. — CPT Tynice Roundtree, 524th CSB

MAJ Brian K. Hedrick

